

Canada Watch

PRACTICAL AND AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY NATIONAL ISSUES

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND REVITALIZATION IN CANADA

Deputy director's introduction

The Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies is York University's research engine for a collaborative and critical study of Canada. One conversation that has been growing in importance and prominence in the last two decades at the Centre concerns the enduring legacies of Indigenous–Settler dynamics that have shaped and continue to shape the country, and, more recently, the ways in which the Centre can support initiatives leading toward reconciliation. In light of the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada (2015), which notably emphasize the importance of Indigenous language preservation and revitalization, and of the United Nations declaring 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages, we have prepared a special issue of *Canada Watch* that puts Indigenous language preservation and revitalization efforts in Canada front and centre, with an unusual twist: three short contributions from linguists, followed by an informative booklet entitled *Indigenous Languages in Canada*, written by Dr. Will Oxford, an associate professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Manitoba.


The intent of this special issue is threefold: to share this booklet produced by one of the Robarts Centre's key community partners, the Canadian Language Museum; to offer our readership a better understanding of the work that linguists do to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages in Canada; and to illustrate

BY JEAN MICHEL MONTSION

Jean Michel Montsion is deputy director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies (2019-20) and an associate professor in the Canadian Studies Program at Glendon College, York University.

such work by presenting two recent initiatives, organized at the Glendon campus of York University, where the study of languages and intercultural contact is part of Glendon College's academic mission and history. Work undertaken by the Canadian Language Museum under the leadership of Dr. Elaine Gold, and by Glendon faculty members such as Dr. Ian Martin, demonstrates well how one can work toward Indigenous language preservation and revitalization in Canada in concrete ways, from knowledge dissemination in public and community settings, to advocacy work with government bodies on specific legislation. The articles by Dr. Gold and Dr. Martin highlight York's Glendon campus as a site of conversation and action in sustaining these discussions, and they illustrate how Settler Canadians can ensure that Indigenous languages are discussed and made visible in Settler institutions in Canada, such as governments, museums, and academia. The third article, by Dr. Oxford, presents more explicitly how academics are confronted by the tension between being part of academia—a Settler institution—and having an individual intent and responsibility to support Indigenous lan-

guage preservation and revitalization efforts. Dr. Oxford also discusses key insights on the contribution of linguistics to Canadian Studies—a helpful primer before readers delve into the booklet appended to this issue.

We extend our sincere thanks to Dr. Gold, Dr. Martin, and Dr. Oxford for their contributions to this special issue, and for their continued work on Indigenous language preservation and revitalization in the Canadian context. It is our hope that this special issue will serve as inspiration for the ways in which Settler Canadians can educate themselves; listen, read, and learn from Indigenous leaders and communities; support ongoing initiatives for Indigenous language preservation and revitalization in Canada; and make a personal commitment to advance reconciliation in their own lives. 

REFERENCES

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